

Oral History Program: Biographical Notes

Nell Glenora MACKIE (1917-2002)

Teacher and Librarian

Birth & Family: Born 11 November 1917, died 27 June 2002; parents Norman and Mary Mackie, father a tram conductor.

One brother: Douglas Thomas John Cleave Mackie, born 1916, died in infancy.

Education: Attended Secondary School at Neutral Bay Intermediate High School (1930-1932), then went to North Sydney Girls' High for senior years.

Qualifications:

Memberships:

Awards:

Work History: Grew up in North Sydney. As a schoolgirl, Miss Mackie was a great friend of Elizabeth (Ellie) Cash, eldest daughter of Dr Frank Cash, Minister of Christ Church, Lavender Bay, and spent a lot of time with their family at the Rectory at Lavender Bay. She has recounted her memories of Dr Cash and his work in producing a detailed photographic record of the workers and construction of the Sydney Harbour Bridge

Miss Mackie decided at the end of primary school that she would like to be a teacher. After completing high school, she went to Sydney Teachers' College, then a part of Sydney University. She had hoped to teach Botany but this subject was gradually being discontinued as all schools were changing to Science, so she chose English and History, her next favourite subjects.

As a young teacher, Miss Mackie was sent to do 4 years country service near Mudgee, where she taught all classes from Kindergarten upwards – teachers had to be prepared to fill any role in those days. She was very unhappy away from family and friends, and eventually was appointed to a high school in Sydney, teaching English and History, much to her delight as she loved the work – in spite of difficult Principals.

For recreation, Miss Mackie enjoyed Modern Expressive Ballet, which led to her being asked to train a squad of high school girls to take part in the dance display at the Easter Show.

About this time, Miss Mackie found that the Education Department's requirements regarding the correction of English and History notes and essays imposed a very heavy workload, so she decided to do a Library course which would qualify her to run school libraries, and planned to return to teaching at a later date. She was teaching at Willoughby Girls' High School at the time, and when a vacancy occurred there for a Librarian, she was appointed to this role.

During her career, Miss Mackie realised a lifelong ambition to visit England, which she did in 1950-52 as an exchange teacher posted to Newcastle-on-Tyne, her salary and the cost of travel being paid for from

Australia. While there, she travelled extensively in the United Kingdom, Ireland and Europe. Meeting the Queen was a highlight of her 15 months in England.

Miss Mackie was at Willoughby Girls' High School from around 1959 until retirement. During this time she undertook to write the history of the school for the anniversary of the School's foundation [1934-1974]. After retirement, she wrote a sequel: *NEWS – News Extracts of Willoughby School*, which included information from students which had arrived too late to be included in the original book.

Some well known former students include opera singers Yvonne Kenny and Amanda Thane, and actors Rebecca Gilling and Joanna Lockwood.

In retirement, Miss Mackie joined various groups, such as the Royal Australian Historical Society, the Friends of the(?) Royal Botanic Gardens, Baptist and Anglican churches, and the Friends of Gore Hill (*Just Gore Hill or Gore Hill Cemetery?*). She also enjoyed opera, attending whenever possible.

Miss Mackie continued to maintain a connection with Willoughby Girls' High School; she often attended the afternoon teas organised by the Willoughby Old Girls' Association and wrote the foreword for a booklet produced by them entitled *Willoughby Old Girls' Association, Register of Members 1999-2000 and Recollections*.

Nor did she ever miss a Presentation Day at Willoughby Girls' High School. The School has introduced an annual "Miss Mackie Award" which will be announced each year on Presentation Day.

Prepared by Jill Willis, January 2004 from oral history interview conducted by Sarah Szacsvey on 02.07.1998.